

Last time we discussed **Luke 6:20-23** **“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.”** John Dear says to look at the opposite of the Beatitudes to discover who Jesus really is. **“Blessed are the rich. Blessed are the violent. Blessed are those who hunger for injustice. Blessed are those who show no mercy. Blessed are the impure. Blessed are the warmakers. Blessed are those who are never persecuted and who never struggle.”** Can you see the rebellious nature of Jesus? How does Jesus’s teaching differ from the world? **James C. Howell** – (1957-) James C. Howell is senior pastor of Myers Park United Methodist Church, Charlotte, NC. A native of Columbia, SC, he studied chemistry and physics at the University of South Carolina. He holds a PhD and MDiv from Duke University. Howell has published 20 books, including *Why This Jubilee?*, *Yours Are the Hands of Christ*, and *Servants, Misfits, and Martyrs*. Biking, hiking, and reading fill his spare time. He and his wife, Lisa, a photographer and community activist, have three grown children.

The Declaration of Independence states we have the right to pursue happiness. But “blessed” has nothing to do with “happy”. The definition of “happiness” has changed from ancient times to today. The word “makarios” was used for the word “blessed” which means “happy”. What do you think the difference in the meaning of the Greek word “makarios” is today as opposed to when it was used in ancient times? What were the people of the days of Christ happy about?

Happy - feeling or showing pleasure or contentment. having a sense of confidence in or satisfaction with (a person, arrangement, or situation).

“Happiness” is something I pursue; happiness is up to me. But Jesus’ Beatitudes are about what we cannot achieve, what we cannot make happen, what we can only receive as the most startling of gifts...” What is James Howell saying here?

Mark 8:35 – Jesus said: **“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.”** What does Jesus mean when he says “save his life”? What does he mean when he says “loses his life”?

Gal. 2:20 – Paul wrote: **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”** What is Paul saying?

Kathy Escobar – (1967-) Kathy Escobar is a pastor, writer, advocate, speaker, and spiritual director. She is the co-founder of The Refuge, a mission center and Christian community, which has become a harbor for spiritual shifters in north Denver. An active blogger, Kathy is also the author of *Down We Go: Living into the Wild Ways of Jesus* and co-author of several spiritual direction books, including *Come with Me* and *Refresh*. She lives in Arvada, Colorado, with her husband, Jose, and their five children.

“Much of my previous Christian experience was focused on rising up to be closer to God; now, I’m learning that downward is what draws me nearer to God. When I am with my friends in the darkness and pain, I am acutely aware of God’s presence more than in my comfortable places...” Have you had experiences where you have felt the presence of God during a difficult time? How did this effect your relationship with God?

Have you heard the saying “God helps those who help themselves”? Why is this not scriptural, in fact just the opposite?

Jesus told us we would find life if we gave up our life? What is he telling us?

Francis of Assisi – (ca. 1181-1226) **Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone** (c. 1181 – 3 October 1226), known as **Francis of Assisi**, was an Italian mystic, poet and Catholic friar who founded the religious order of the Franciscans. Inspired to lead a Christian life of poverty, he became a beggar and an itinerant preacher.

One of the most venerated figures in Christianity, Francis was canonized by Pope Gregory IX on 16 July 1228. He is commonly portrayed wearing a brown habit with a rope tied around his waist, featuring three knots symbolizing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In 1219, Francis went to Egypt in an attempt to convert the sultan Al-Kamil and put an end to the conflict of the **Fifth Crusade**. In 1223, he arranged for the first live nativity scene as part of the annual Christmas celebration in Greccio. According to Christian tradition, Francis received the stigmata during the apparition of a Seraphic angel in a religious ecstasy in 1224.

Francis is associated with patronage of animals and the environment. It became customary for churches to hold ceremonies blessing animals on his feast day of 4 October, which became World Animal Day. Francis was noted for his devotion to the Eucharist. Along with Catherine of Siena, Francis was designated patron saint of Italy. He is also the namesake of the city of San Francisco.

“Let us consider, my dear brethren, what our vocation is. It is not only for our own salvation that God has called us by his mercy, but it is for the salvation of many others.” What is Francis telling us?

“It is in order that we should exhort all the world, more by example than by words, to do penance and to keep the divine precepts.” What is he saying here?

“We are looked upon as senseless and contemptible, but let not this depress you; take courage, and be confident that our Lord, who conquered the world, will speak efficaciously through you.....” “Efficaciously” is the adverb form of “efficacious,” meaning in a way that produces the desired or intended result. To act efficaciously is to achieve what one sets out to do, effectively bringing about a specific outcome. Francis is telling us that Jesus will speak through us effectively. What is he telling us to do?

“But make up your minds to bear all this with humble patience, and let nothing alarm you.” How are we to witness to others?

“In a very short time many learned and noble persons will join themselves to you, to preach to kings, to princes, and to nations. Be therefore patient in tribulations, fervent in prayer, and fearless in labor. Be unassuming in speech, be grave in your manner, and grateful for the favors and benefits you may receive. The kingdom of God, which is eternal, will be your reward.”

How is Francis telling us to be when confronting unbelievers and new followers of Christ?